THE MEASURE
A JOURNAL OF POETRY

Poems by Jessica Nelson North, Nelson Antrim Crawford, Pierre Loving, Maxwell Anderson, Helen West Heller, and Others — — — —

The Poet's Right to Publish Discussed — — —

Reviews of Edna St. Vincent Millay — — —

$2.00 by the Year — Single copies 25c — Number 7, Sept. 1921
Published Monthly at 449 West 22nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Entered as second-class matter February 28, 1921, at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879

Contents

POEMS Page

Husbandry. By Carolyn Hall 3

The Poet in the Basement. By Genevieve Taggard 5

Lullaby. By Jessica Nelson North 6

Ambush. By Jessica Nelson North 6

Judith of Minnewaukan. By Maxwell Anderson 7

Bees. By Helen West Heller 12

Churning. By Pierre Loving 13

The Sweeper. By Nelson Antrim Crawford 14

Creed. By Nelson Antrim Crawford 14

On Main Street. By Nelson Antrim Crawford 14

EDITORIAL

The Poet's Right to Publish 15

IN REVIEW

Second April. By Maxwell Anderson 17

A Poet's Play. By Agnes Kendrick Gray 18

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

Number 7 September, 1921

Husbandry

THE Tree:
You are creeping, creeping . . . .
Have you no pity
For the functioning earth,
O thing that men call city?

The Edge of the City:
You do not understand . . . .

The Tree:
I understand that avalanches
Of your chimney smoke
Have swept away from my cool branches
All the birds;
That I am smothering
In this thick, sooty mist
Because my roots are in the mothering
Earth—I have no wings.

The Edge of the City, murmuring:
It is the fittest who survive . . . .

The Tree:
It is not that I am afraid of death;
Acorns are many, one black oak alive

Copyright, 1921, by the Editors

Or dead will make small difference.
But the earth . . . I'd think you might have guessed,
With people intimately along your ways,
The earth is like a woman's breast—
Take away the drinking roots, and leave
A place of pain. Have you no pity,
Strange creeping thing that men call city?

The Edge of the City:

Most arrogant of black oak trees,
You know the fine points of a nest,
The strength of wind, the warmth of sun,
As your successful springs attest—
But there is more than that.
You do not half perceive the shining prism
Of dream that builds a mighty city,
You do not sense the organism
It entails, or how the earth is drained
For miles and miles of all it has to give.

The Tree, as if sighing in the wind:

Have you no pity? Have you no pity?

The Edge of the City:

In the years a city has to live
Its roots run through a nation's soil,
And when the great finale crashes,
The place is barren.
There is no Phoenix springing-up from ashes
Of city out of crumbled city.
Its pomp and glory rise in some new land,
A continent away.
Splendid oak-tree, do you understand?

The Tree:

I thought I heard the sound of wings . . . .

The Edge of the City:

For centuries then the ravaged earth lies fallow,
After a city is gone by.
You need not grieve for loss of shallow
Rootlings of your kind, O Tree . . .

The Tree (A bird, flying by, has alighted in its branches):

Have you come back to nest in me?

Carolyn Hall

The Poet in the Basement

ONLY to tell your loveliness, this love;
Only to tell
Pain's odor, beauty-burning miracle
Of my surrender.
Late I flew. . . .
But ever arrow straight
I fly now from the shade that falls—that fell
Lightly on you,
On me with a wave's weight.

Oh, I must go, this city has a spell
I never gave it leave to have. Still, still to tell
The weaving of your foot-steps on the stairs
With my slow-dropping love for you that wears
Cold stone I want my heart for—still I stay.
Put out the stars, give me another day
Only to tell.

Genevieve Taggard

Lullaby

IT is a restless child,
This vain love I bore him.
Before cock-crow
It wakens and is wild
Clamoring for him.

Hush and lullaby
Child in whom I hope not!
Night is still in the sky
And the dawn flowers open not.
Lullaby!

Hush, and give me peace!
At my heart's core wailing.
It is unavailing,
Cease!
He will come no more.

Ambush

WHO would crouch with me at the fountain-head
Of lost lakes in the dusk of rainy springs?
When the dark air is shrill with wheeling wings
And white on marshy shores untenanted
The ice breaks.

Who would follow the shining teal to bed,
Or green drakes in a thicket of rustling reeds,
Where the wild rice sprouts from the thawing seeds
And gulls wheel
And the ice breaks
And the lone crane feeds at the fountain-head
Of lost lakes?

Jessica Nelson North

Judith of Minnewaukan

THE LAKE

FROM the north, from the mountains,
Up from the prairies, in from the lakes,
The winds blow over Dakota
When the winter wakes;

They blow over Minnewaukan
And the salt shrinking sea;
High on an ancient shore-line
The piers lift ruinously.

Here where the days run endless
From weed-sown mile to mile
Blows the white flower of Judith
For her little while.

In the sunken farmhouse doorway
I have seen Judith stand,
Judith of Minnewaukan,
Her eyes beneath her hand;

And here through a youth of winters,
A youth and a long day,
There comes not prince or beggar
Minnewaukan way.

Within the rim of shore-line
There is wind in fallen reeds
And troubling wind over waters
Where the dead lake recedes.

But who will pass the roadway
Up to the ghost of a town
Before the piers have crumbled
And the grey house is down?

Still in the sunken doorway
  The white-armed Judith stands,
Watching the weed-grown wheel-track,
  Her eyes beneath her hands.

EAST WIND

JUDITH walks alone where the marsh has bitten
  Into the drying lake; the east wind
Blows autumn out of the east; it combs the reeds—
East wind, east wind.

Storm and east wind, and a mother dead.
When a mother is dead is a girl more lonely?
More lonely, not more alone, she has said.
The marsh is wide; there is marsh, marsh only

As far as the sky runs out to the dark,
As far as the moonrise; far, perhaps, as the sea.
What has a mother ever told me
Save that she loved a lover, hated me?

Loved a lover, hated a husband;
The darkness grows; the wind has fallen;
The reeds lie quiet; the paths are hidden;
So was her heart when she married him,
Bride and no maiden.

East wind and storm, a lover
Covered with night, would she give her lips for an hour?
He has given me to her, and he has forgotten . . .
And now have the foolish gods brought Judith to flower.

What then though lover and husband were one—
And the same wind blew for her over the marsh and lake—
He had forgotten—she had waited too long . . .
Bitterly she married for my sake.

Judith walks alone where the marsh has drunk
The lake and the night; east wind
Blows cold autumn out of the east toward winter—
Winter wind, east wind.

JUDITH'S HOUSE

THIS house is Judith's silence. Bring
What footfall here you will,
Silence has drugged it at the threshold.
The floor is still. The walls are still.

Bring what clouds will ever gather
Over the lake and the sunken town,
The noise of the shocking clouds will perish.
The house has smothered it, borne it down.

In her mother's room the mirrors
Tremble and change; white faces stir
Staring into her eyes; should she whisper
No sound comes back to her.

Is there a lake, knife-edged with whetting
Against the basket grass in rain?
Is there a wind blowing up the lightning
To play the old play of the storms again?

There is no lake, no lightning blowing.
There are only rooms with bending walls,
Bending over her, bending to smother
Her one voice if she calls.

MORNING AND NIGHT

THE cloud-bank lies in a red-gold ring;
The wind-break thins of leaves;
From the red-gold fields
They have carried the sheaves.

It will be night again. The lights
Come out above the piers,
Come out again in the wind-searched dark
And the earth turns heavily down the years.

After the night it will again be morning;
Alone between the lake and sky
Judith remembers night and morning,
And morning and night pass by.

Spring, and the unknown farm-hands
Sow the grey land to the north with grain;
Autumn, and unknown harvesters
Come back for the grain again.

When a north-wind blows she has heard their voices
On the wind blown and torn;
They pass in a mask of shadows;
Life passes; noon and night and morn.

Slit the thin cobweb, let the thread burn through.
Why should it hold her longer to the play
Who has found only morning answering midnight,
Only dark answering day?

JUDITH'S END

ALL winds that bring down winter,
All nights hungering with cold,
Come with trampling, come now together,
Bury your gold.

You may have your way in the garden;
Blow in, blow in the door;
There is no fire to fear, O rain;
Ruin the chimney, stain the floor.

She who swept the pathway,
She who kept the spring,
No one has seen your mistress Judith
Or brought home word of her travelling.

She has gone. Has she married a farmer?
Is she dead? Should the wind reply
What could it answer, how might the wind know
More than you and I?

There is no Judith; the house has fallen;
There are leaves in the spring; the piers are down;
The marsh drinks long at the brackish water.
There is only the lake's rim, and the town.

East wind that brings down winter,
O all nights hungering with cold,
Come with trampling, come snow-heavy,
Bury your gold.

Maxwell Anderson

Bees

BURDENING and disburdening,
yellow and black and
velvet-fimbriate, whirring rays
fallen at varying angles on
beaded amber lights and violet shade.

But somewhere are vermilions—
and orchids—and virid greens!

Deliberate rummagers,
ambidextrous, be-smeared,
pollen-weighted from sun-flowers
along a neighbor's yard;
(Zoroastrians bowing morn and eve).

But Orients blaze with orange,
lazuli, oriflammes over-dyed!

Drinking at the brink of the
rain-water barrel north the house;
mow and lumber-room resound
their double-bass, divulging mys-
teries of shadowed eaves.

But Souths unbound and warm flout
these umber domesticities!

On odorous drift-wind come
a-prying into jellies drying in
the sun; crawling second-story
thieves; bronze trinkets
lost in bordered mignonette.

But lamellar emerald
wings glow in mellower worlds!

While sapping abundance from rare-ripe
grapes, from aromatic wind-falls
hid in orchard grass,
all the dewless hours blend orlo,
rebec and lute in droning strains.

But suns and winds somewhere are
redolent of riper fruits and stains.

Helen West Heller

Churning

WHILE I was churning butter
He made a gay sweet song
That laughed away the clutter
Of cares beside the door.

I overlooked the burdocks in the patch
For I had set heart's store
On music brushed with little words
Of honey, struggling at the latch. . . .
So Spring departed from the throats of birds
(Spring drifted now inside) . . .

A match!
Almost I could feel it, see it splutter
Flame which the pipe-bowl drew within,
Above the leaning mandolin.

The wind-loud leaves took up the song
And I became half-negligent that Spring had made
The singing will of leaves, the talk of birds
As overtone to dabbled human music that must fade
Like silver foxes scutting into cover.
But I am busy at the butter. . . . .
And now at last the honey-worded song is over
And he has earned his dish of curds.

Pierre Loving

The Sweeper

I SWEPT time forth across the threshold
Of my room.
It was grey, wet, rough, and heavy
On my yellow broom.

"Like sand left by the tide," I said.

The tide floods sand slowly, curvingly
Back once more.
Perhaps tomorrow time will be flooded back
Upon my floor.
I will thrust fast the bolts,
And stuff the crevices with rags,
Lest time creep in
Beneath my door.

Creed

NOT leaves burned shapeless, nor leaves sere lying,
But the green, green bough:
Not love forgotten, nor love remembered,
But love now.

On Main Street

THE Greek lad
In the shoe-shine parlor on Main Street
Has a liturgy of shoe-shining:
So many taps of the hand on the leather,
So many snaps of the polishing cloth,
So many crackles with a bit of tin in his hand,
And under his breath intoned foreign words.
The words? Those of the server at the Divine Liturgy
In the Church of St. James in Nauplia,
Repeated in the shoe-shine parlor on Main Street.

Nelson Antrim Crawford

The Measure ~ *A Journal of Poetry*

Published monthly by the Editors at 449 West 22nd St., N. Y.

Edited by Maxwell Anderson, Padraic Colum, Agnes Kendrick Gray, Carolyn Hall, Frank Ernest Hill, Louise Townsend Nicholl, George O'Neil, Pitts Sanborn, Genevieve Taggard. From these nine an acting editor and an assistant are elected quarterly by the board.

Associate Editors—Robert Hillyer and David Morton

ACTING EDITOR: LOUISE TOWNSEND NICHOLL
ASSISTANT EDITOR: AGNES KENDRICK GRAY

The Poet's Right to Publish

THE actual date of publication of a poet's book is sometimes of less importance to him, and much less real, than some two or three other dates, dimly definite, when he had suddenly come to the end of one period or the high-water-mark of another, and when he knew that now was the time for showing what he had done, what he was going to do, and how far along he had come. And these dim dates belong as well to those poets who never *have* an actual date set down below a publisher's name as to those who do; these shadowy milestones are the common property of poets. The question is, how can poets show their work when, for their own imperative and inexplicable reasons, they most want it shown?

Emmy Veronica Sanders, Dutch writer, who has just gone back to Holland after living in New York for several years, has given, in a letter to the editors of *The Measure,* her reaction to Padraic Colum's editorial in the May number on "Poetry and Publicity," with some suggestions as to what the answer might be to that question. She has said that I might quote her, which I do not only because what she says is interesting, but because she, as a stranger here and a person who has lived a writer's life in several other countries, sees conditions as they are. Her contention that poets, like all other artists, must depend on themselves only, and that they must not feel themselves any more helpless than any other species, is so true that it might as well be realized quickly by all of us.

She speaks of the improbability of a new poet getting a book published for a long, long time, and of the limited and fragmentary maga-

zine market. And when he has gotten poems into several magazines, what does it mean in real satisfaction? "What is he and what are others confronted with but 'disjecta membra poetae'; fragments of different parts of himself—here a bit of a nose; there half a finger, or half a foot. But never so much as a whole distinct profile, not even to mention a full face—or a torso."

As solution she suggests " a sort of compromise and intermediate between the ordinary poetry magazine and the published volume, a monthly magazine in form and management, but restricting itself to bringing forward in each issue perhaps three, instead of any number of, poets, each being represented by a comparatively large group of poems, showing at least the profile.

"Even if I were not a poet or a writer myself, it would be my conviction that the only person to decide about the desirability of exhibiting art work of any kind is or ought to be the artist himself, the maker of that work, and no one else. The quality of his work has nothing to do with his right to exhibit at such times as he wishes to do so. All that is required is that he be a hard and honest worker and devote the best of his time and strength to the purpose of his art.

"It seems to me that the wretched conditions prevailing in the world of art, literature, poetry, are too commonly considered unalterable and fixed for all time by everybody—including the artists themselves. Something might be done in the way of cooperative poets' undertakings—cooperative publishing by poets' societies of books and periodicals both, membership in those societies *eo ipso* to give a right to publication, once or a certain limited number of times inside a certain period, of volumes or at least poems or groups of poems without editorial veto."

Both suggestions, for opening magazines to larger and more representative groups of the poems of fewer poets, and for cooperative publishing of books by poets, are good; the latter is, I think, better. Poems can never go into a magazine without some "editorial veto." Editing is a good thing, and any editor worth the name has the job of not only satisfactorily showing what his poets can do but also of making a beautiful and perfect piece of art of the magazine itself. But a cooperative group of poet-publishers, when it has once clearly made up its mind to include in itself only the "hard and honest workers," will need no vetoes of any kind except from the individual poets. This would be, so far as I know, a new venture. It certainly would be a good one.

Louise Townsend Nicholl

Second April

Second April, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Mitchell Kennerley, New York.

WHEN poetry is perfect and moving there is little to be said about it except that it is so; a reviewer can quote it and point to it, and there, unless he should try to rewrite it in prose and thereby make himself ridiculous, his function ends. Not that Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Second April* is above criticism. In common with all other poets of the period she often searches in vain for a subject and at last contents herself with a theme too slight or too fantastic to be worth handling. There is small excuse for *The Blue-Flag in the Bog* or *The Bean-stalk*—none in fact, save the artistry wasted on them. The theme of *Doubt No More That Oberon* is so hackneyed that one is left flatly wondering why it should have been printed. The *Ode to Silence,* the longest venture in the volume, is an artificial ecstasy; exquisite treatment cannot save it.

But *Inland, Wild Swans,* the *Elegy,* and the third of the twelve sonnets are powerful, humanly moving, perfectly touched, said as only a first-class artist could say them. There are other things of nearly equal excellence, and the whole book rises above the tin-pan procession of the usual by virtue of an almost flawless sensitiveness to phrase. Miss Millay, also, is one of the most clear-headed poets who ever put pen to paper. She is akin to Burns in the definiteness of her object and the astonishing accuracy with which she finds the exact homely image to clinch her meaning. This from *Exiled,* for example:

> "Always I climbed the wave at morning,
> Shook the sand from my shoes at night."

Second April resolves a doubt, too, a doubt that the brilliant child of *Renascence* would ever grow up. That she has taken on a woman's stature is best proved by the sonnets. I have space to quote but one:

> "Not with libations, but with shouts and laughter
> We drenched the altars of Love's sacred grove,
> Shaking to earth green fruits, impatient after
> The launching of the colored moths of Love.
> Love's proper myrtle and his mother's zone
> We bound about our irreligious brows,
> And fettered him with garlands of our own,
> And spread a banquet in his frugal house.
> Not yet the god has spoken; but I fear
> Though we should break our bodies in his flame,
> And pour our blood upon his altar, here
> Henceforward is a grove without a name,
> A pasture to the shaggy goats of Pan,
> Whence flee forever a woman and a man."

Maxwell Anderson

A Poet's Play

The Lamp and the Bell: A Drama in Five Acts, by Edna St. Vincent Millay. Frank Shay, New York.

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY turns with Protean ease from drama to lyric, lyric to drama, and her latest published play is "The Lamp and the Bell," a poetic spectacular tragedy of Mediaeval Italy. This drama is almost a pageant in form, but a well-knit plot runs through the many small scenes of the play, and all the numerous characters throw their special shaft of light upon the two central figures of the story: *Beatrice,* daughter of *Lorenzo,* King of Fiori, and *Bianca,* her step-sister.

The play begins during the childhood of these two princesses, who become friends so devoted, that cruelest circumstance and ironic tragedy cannot destroy their love for one another.

This *motif* of unquenchable friendship is the gentlest touch that I have found in any of Miss Millay's work. The cynicism, even bitterness, which often creeps into her verse, is lacking in the delineation of these two characters. They are delicately drawn, exquisite figures, outlined against a background of much Mediaeval intrigue and pomp, colorful and picturesque. Their childish affection ripens into an imperishable devotion of womanhood, despite many deep cross-currents of lost love and disaster, which run between their lives. *Bianca* weds *Mario,* the young King of Lagoverde, who first loved *Beatrice.* Yet Beatrice hides her grief and chagrin from her foster-sister and is happy in her happiness. On the eve of the wedding, the young girls pledge their perpetual affection for one another in words which give the clue to the title of the drama. . . .

Bianca.—I tell you I shall never think of you
Throughout my life, without such tenderness
As breaks the heart,—and I shall think of you
Whenever I am most happy, whenever I am
Most sad, whenever I see a beautiful thing.
You are a burning lamp to me, a flame
The wind cannot blow out, and I shall hold you
High in my hand against whatever darkness.
Beatrice.—You are to me a silver bell in a tower,
And when it rings I know I am near home.

Because it is tuned to the pitch of Mediaeval life, the verse of *The Lamp and the Bell* is of course more archaic at times than is usual with Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose unhampered poetry is crisp and modern. Yet there flows through the play the same piquancy of expression, that whimsical turn of a phrase so often found in her short poems, and her blank verse is instinct with dramatic sense, a quality which is also apparent in her lyric work.

Agnes Kendrick Gray

Who the Contributors Are

Jessica Nelson North (Mrs. R. I. MacDonald) is president of the University of Chicago Poetry Club, and secretary to the President of the University. Until now, she has published chiefly children's poems.

Helen West Heller, who lives in Canton, Ill., is a subjective painter, a member of the Society of Independent Artists, New York. She is especially interested, she says, in "the common mathematical basis of all the arts, and in philology."

Pierre Loving, of Greenwich Village, is concerned chiefly with drama. His "Fifty Contemporary One-Act Plays," on which he collaborated with Frank Shay, was published this year.

Nelson Antrim Crawford, who is a professor of journalism in the Kansas State Agricultural College, is a writer of satire and criticism as well as of poetry.

Advance in Subscription Price

Beginning with the October number the subscription price of *The Measure* will be raised from $2.00 to $2.50 a year.

A Statement of THE MEASURE Affairs

All the arts lead somewhat struggling lives in the United States, but poetry is most neglected among them.

☼ ☼ ☼

It grows, when it does grow, dandelion-fashion by the roadside. It sifts occasionally into crevices of the magazines of fiction and opinion. The verses that find their way into such publications must be brief and not too experimental. They must be, if not ready made, at least in an accepted mode.

☼ ☼ ☼

An art does not come to flower under these conditions. If it is to rise above mediocrity it must function without too many restraints on its form and matter.

☼ ☼ ☼

The Measure was established to furnish a medium for poetry judged as poetry, entirely aside from considerations of space and policy. It offers freedom of form and of imagination.

☼ ☼ ☼

In order that the editorship shall not be one-sided the nine poets who founded the magazine elect an acting editor quarterly and give him power of life or death over submitted poems.

☼ ☼ ☼

Publication began in March; two editors have served, Maxwell Anderson and Padraic Colum, and Louise Townsend Nicholl is at the beginning of her term. Expenses, over subscription receipts, have been borne so far entirely by the editors and their friends. Printing bills have been met and poems have been paid for, but the board, which is composed of men and women who work for a living, is compelled to ask for assistance.

☼ ☼ ☼

With fifteen hundred dollars a year we could get along. It seems little to ask in the heart of a spendthrift civilization, yet it would be enough; for the rest we can take care of ourselves. We hope for ten patrons who will contribute $100 and for fifty who will contribute $10 a year.

☼ ☼ ☼

Send all communications to

THE MEASURE, 449 W. 22nd Street, New York City